

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-19

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6901

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SANAA

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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 2145

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, US, MY
SUBJ: US POLICY TOWARD THE INDIAN OCEAN; VIEW FROM KUALA LUMPUR

REF: NEW DELHI 5616

SUMMARY: THE MALAYSIANS HAVE NOT BEEN STRIDENT OR CARPING IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO OUR INDIAN OCEAN POLICY, BUT HAVE LEFT US IN NO DOUBT OF THEIR NEGATIVE POSITION. THE RATIONALE WE HAVE OFFERED THUS FAR HAS BEEN EITHER UNPERSUASIVE OR DISQUIETING. THEY SUSPECT GREAT POWER REALPOLITIK IS REAL REASON FOR OUR PRESENCE. WE SEE NO PROSPECT OF CHANGING THIS ATTITUDE, AND FEEL THAT CONSULTATIONS PROPOSED IN REFTEL WOULD TEND TO ORGANIZE AND FORMALIZE OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE THE MALAYSIAN GOVT HAS COME OUT FORMALLY AGAINST THE UK-US PLANS FOR IMPROVING FACILITIES AT DIEGO GARCIA, THERE HAS BEEN NO HARPING CHORUS OF OPPOSITION HERE. MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS HAVE NOT RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH ME DIRECTLY NOR WITH VISITING SENIOR US OFFICIALS (ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL, SECRETARY SHULTZ). THE MALAYSIAN PRESS, DESPITE NUMBER OF INFORMAL OPPORTUNITIES, HAS NOT ASKED ME ABOUT IT. THIS RETICENCE I ASCRIBE TO A) MALAY POLITENESS IN AVOIDING A POINT OF CONTROVERSY, B) NO FEELING OF NEED TO FIND FAULT WITH US, AND C) RESIGNED ACCEPTANCE THAT THEY CANNOT CHANGE GREAT POWER REALPOLITIK. OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN QUESTIONED SHARPLY BY FOREIGN OFFICE WORKING-LEVEL TYPES. PRESS COMMENT, AS WE HAVE REPORTED, HAS BEEN GENERALLY NEGATIVE AND WE HAVE BEEN
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LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT THE MALAYSIAN GOVT SEES OUR DIEGO GARCIA DECISION AS RUNNING COUNTER TO FUNDAMENTAL GOM FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES.

2. SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUR DECISION IN FEBRUARY, A NUMBER OF STATE AND DEFENSE DEPT OFFICIALS HAVE TRIED TO PROVIDE THE SIMPLE, CONSISTENT LONG RANGE RATIONALE, REQUESTED BY AMBASSADOR MOYNIHAN. AS I READ THE MALAYSIAN REACTION,

PEOPLE HERE EITHER DON'T ACCEPT OR ARE DISTURBED BY MOST OF THE ARGUMENTS WE HAVE THUS FAR ADVANCED. SOME WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES REALISTS ACCEPT THE PREMISE THAT AN AMERICAN PRESENCE TO BALANCE A SOVIET PRESENCE IS A REGRETTABLE NECESSITY. MORE PREVALENT IS A STRONG SKEPTICISM THAT THE SOVIET NAVY WOULD IN ANY SITUATION SHORT OF GENERAL WAR ATTEMPT TO BLOCK INDIAN OCEAN SEA LANES. THEY SEE NO INCREASED SOVIET POLITICAL INFLUENCE DERIVING FROM A NAVAL PRESENCE AND THEREFORE NO NEED TO BALANCE IT WITH AN AMERICAN PRESENCE. THERE IS AN ALMOST UNIVERSAL DISPOSITION TO FIND BEYOND OUR ARGUMENTS SOME DEEPER GLOBAL POWER GAME, SOME MANIPULATION OF NUCLEAR STRATEGIC BARGAINING CHIPS WHICH BRINGS INTO THEIR BACK YARD GREAT POWER RIVALRY.

3. THE MALAYSIANS ARE NOT REASSURED BY OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT A NAVAL PRESENCE "DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO OUR DIPLOMATIC OBJECTIVES," AND "GIVES STRENGTH TO OUR DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS." THIS THEY SEE AS MODERN DAY SHORTHAND FOR GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY, SUGGESTING PERHAPS A DESIRE TO HOLD OVER THE HEADS OF THE MIDDLE EAST OIL STATES THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME KIND OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. EVEN THE IDEA THAT OUR NAVAL PRESENCE DEMONSTRATES OUR CONCERN FOR REGIONAL SECURITY AND STABILITY MEETS WITH SOME RESENTMENT. THE GROWING REGIONAL SELF-ASSURANCE RECOGNIZED BY THE NIXON DOCTRINE HAS GENERATED A MONROE DOCTRINE SPIRIT THAT REJECTS THE RIGHT OF OUTSIDE POWERS TO DEFINE REGIONAL SECURITY NEEDS AND ACT TO MEET THEM.

4. FROM THE ARGUMENTS WE HAVE ADVANCED THUS FAR, I SEE NO PROSPECT THAT WE COULD DEVELOP A RATIONALE WHICH WOULD CHANGE MALAYSIA'S BASICALLY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE. A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED STATEMENT OF ENDORSEMENT FOR THE CONCEPT OF A PEACEFUL INDIAN OCEAN MIGHT BE A GOOD TACTICAL MOVE TO DEFLECT FURTHER

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ISOLATION IN THE UN ON THIS ISSUE, BUT SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY DECIDED INTERNALLY THAT OUR PRESENCE IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO ANY GIVEN LEVEL OF SOVIET SHIP DEPLOYMENTS, I SEE FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT LITTLE TO BE GAINED FROM ACTIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH THE LITTORAL STATES AND A GREATER LIKELIHOOD THAT SUCH CONSULTATIONS WOULD TEND TO ORGANIZE AND FORMALIZE OPPOSITION TO OUR POSITION. IF WE HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING, PERHAPS WE SHOULD STICK TO THE POINT THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN IS PART OF THE HIGH SEAS WHICH WE INTEND TO SAIL PEACEFULLY.

5. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I DON'T FIND THE ARGUMENTS WE HAVE ADVANCED FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN PRESENCE VERY PERSUASIVE. THE "OPEN SEA LANES" RATIONALE DOES NOT BEAR CLOSE SCRUTINY. IF JAPAN, WITH UPWARDS OF 90 PERCENT OF ITS PETROLEUM PASSING THROUGH THE INDIAN OCEAN, DOESN'T FEEL HANDS AT THE THROAT,

WHY SHOULD OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS REQUIRE A NAVAL PRESENCE
FOR THIS PURPOSE? MORE BASIC, HOW IS THIS NAVAL POWER
APPLICABLE TO OUR BRAODER OBJECTIVES IN THE LITTORAL STATES?
ONE OF OUR SPOKESMAN HAS SAID THAT ANY NATION WHICH HAS THE
CAPABILITY TO PROJECT SUBSTANTIAL NAVAL POWER INTO THE INDIAN
OCEAN AUTOMATICALLY ACQUIRES SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE BOTH
WITH THE LITTORAL STATES AND THE STATES OUTSIDE THE AREA
WHICH ARE DEPENDENT ON THE FREE USE OF ITS SEA LANES. THIS
MAY HAVE BEEN TRUE IN THE 19TH CENTURY, BUT IS IT TRUE TODAY?
DOESN'T THE INFLUENCE NOW COME FROM A CAPABILITY TO PROJECT
FOOD POWER, FERTILIZER POWER, FUEL POWER? IF THE REAL REASONS
FOR THE PRESENCE LIE IN A COMPLEX STRATEGIC POWER GAME WHICH
WE FEEL WE MUST PLAY WITH THE RUSSIANS, WHATEVER THE COMPLAINTS
OF THE INDIAN OCEAN STATES, THEN PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER
TO KEEP QUIET AND BEAR THE COSTS.
UNDERHILL

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